

fore, methynketh men oghten nat reprove me, though I putte me in a litel peril for to venge me, and though I do a greet excesse, that is to seyn, that I venge oon outrage by another.

QUOD dame Prudence, ye seyn youre wyl and as yow liketh; but in no caas of the world a man sholde nat doon outrage ne excesse for to venge hym: for Cassidore seith: that As yuele dooth he that vengeth hym by outrage, as he that dooth the outrage; and therefore, ye shul venge yow after the ordre of right, that is to seyn, by the lawe, and noght by excesse ne by outrage. And also, if ye wol venge yow of the outrage of youre adversaries in oother manere than right comandeth, ye synnen; & therfore seith Senec: that A man shal nevere venge shrewednesse by shrewednesse. And if ye seye, that right axeth a man to defenden violence by violence, and fightyng by fightyng, certes, ye seye sooth, whan the defense is doon anon withouten interalle or withouten taryng or delay, for to defenden hym and nat for to venge hym. And it bihoveth that a man putte swich attemperance in his defense, that men have no cause ne matiere to reprove hym that defendeth hym of excesse and outrage; for ellis were it agayn resoun. Pardee, ye knowen wel, that yemaken no defense as now for to defende yow, but for to venge yow; and so seweth it that ye han no wyl to do youre dede attemprely. And therefore, methynketh that pacience is good, for Salomon seith: that He that is nat pacient shal have greet harm.

CERTES, quod Melibee, I graunte yow, that whan a man is impacient and wrooth, of that that toucheth hym noght and that aperteneth nat unto hym, though it harme hym, it is no wonder, for the lawe seith that He is coupable that entremetteth or medleth with swich thyng as aperteneth nat unto hym. And Salomon seith, that He that entremetteth hym of the noyse or strif of another man, is lyk to hym that taketh an hound by the eris. For right as he that taketh a straunge hound by the eris is outhervile biten with the hound, right in the same wise is it resoun that he have harm, that by his impacience medleth hym of the noyse of another man, whereas it aperteneth nat unto hym. But ye knowen wel that this dede, that is to seyn, my grief and my disese, toucheth me right ny; and therfore, though I be wrooth & impacient, it is no merveille. And, sayyngge youre grace, I kan nat seen that it myghte greetly harme me though I tooke vengeance; for I am richer and moore myghty than myne enemys been. And wel knowen ye, that by moneye & by havynge grete possessions

been alle the thynges of this world governed; and Salomon seith: that Alle thynges obeyen to moneye.

HAN Prudence hadde herd hir housbonde avanten hym of his richesse and of his moneye, dispreisyngge the power of his adversaries, she spak, and seyde in this wise. Certes, deere sire, I graunte yow that ye been riche and myghty, and that the richesces been goode to hem that han wel ygeten hem and wel konne usen hem. For right as the body of a man may nat lyven withoute the soule, namoore may it lyve withoute temporel goodes; and by richesces may a man gete hym grete freendes. And therfore seith Pamphilus. If a netherdes doghter, seith he, be riche, she may chesen of a thousand men which she wol take to hir housbonde; for, of a thousand men, oon wol nat forsaken hire ne refusen hire. And this Pamphilus seith also. If thou be right happy, that is to seyn, if thou be right riche, thou shalt fynde a greet nombre of felawes & freendes. And if thy fortune change that thou were povre, farewell freendshipe & felaweshipe; for thou shalt be al alloone withouten any compaignye, but if it be the compaignye of povre folk. And yet seith this Pamphilus moreover: that They that been thralle and bonde of lynage shullen been maad worthy & noble by the richesces. And right so as by richesces ther comen manye goodes, right so by poverté come ther manye harmes and yveles; for greet poverté constreyneth a man to do manye yveles. And therfore clepeth Cassidore poverté The mooder of ruyne; that is to seyn, the mooder of overthrowyngge or fallynge down. And therfore seith Piers Alfonse. Oon of the gretteste adversitees of this world is whan a free man, by kynde or by burthe, is constreyned by poverté to eten the almesse of his enemy. And the same seith Innocent in oon of his bookes, he seith: that Sorweful and myshappy is the condicioun of a povre beggere, for if he axe nat his mete he dyeth for hunger; and if he axe, he dyeth for shame; and algates necessitee constreyneth hym to axe. And therfore seith Salomon: that Bet it is to dye than for to have swich poverté. And as the same Salomon seith. Bettre it is to dye of bitter deeth than for to lyven in swich wise. By thise resons that I have seid unto yow, and by manye othere resons that I koude seye, I graunte yow that richesces been goode to hem that geten hem wel, and to hem that wel usen tho richesces. And therfore wol I shewe yow how ye shul have yow, & how ye shul bere yow in gaderyngge of richesces, and in what manere ye shul usen hem.

FIRST, ye shul geten hem withouten greet desir, by good leyser, soflyngly, & nat over hastily; for a man that is to desiryngge to gete richesces abaundoneth hym first to thefte, & to alle other yveles. And therfore seith Salomon. He that hasteth hym to bisily to wereche shal be noon innocent. He seith also: that The richesce that hastily cometh to a man, soone & lightly gooth & passeth fro a man; but that richesce that cometh litel and litel, wexeth alwey & multiplieth. And sire, ye shul geten richesces by youre wit & by youre travaille unto youre profit; & that withouten wrong or harm doynge to any oother persone. For the lawe seith: that Chermaketh no man himselfen riche, if he do harm to another wight: this is to seyn, that nature defendeth and forbedeth by right, that no man make himselfe riche by right, that no man make himselfe riche unto the harm of another persone. And Tullius seith: that No sorwe, ne no drede of deeth, ne no thyng that may falle unto a man, is so muchel agayns nature, as a man to encessen his owene profit to the harm of another man. And though the grete men and the myghty men geten richesces moore lightly than thou, yet shaltou nat been ydel ne slow to do thy profit; for thou shalt in alle wise flee ydelnesse; for Salomon seith: that Ydelnesse techeth a man to do manye yveles. And the same Salomon seith: that He that travailleth & bisiet hym to tilen his land, shal eeten breed; but he that is ydel and casteth hym to no bisynesse ne occupacioun, shal falle into poverté, and dye for hunger. And he that is ydel and slow, kan nevere fynde covenable tyme for to doon his profit. For ther is a versifour seith: that The ydel man excuseth hym in wynter, bycause of the grete coold; and in somer, by enchesoun of the heete, for thise causes seith Caton. Waketh and enclyneth nat yow overmuchel for to slepe; for overmuchel reste norisseth and causeth manye vices. And therfore seith Seint Jerome: Dooth somme goode dedes, that the devel, which is oure enemy, ne fynde yow nat unoccupied. For the devel ne taketh nat lightly unto his werkynge swiche as he fyndeth occupied in goode werkkes.

SANNE thus in getyngge richesces, ye mosten flee ydelnesse; and afterward ye shul use the richesces, whiche ye have geten by youre wit & by youre travaille, in swich a manere, that men holde nat yow to scars, ne to sparyngge, ne to foollarge; that is to seyn, overlarge a spendere. For right as men blamen an avaricious man bycause of his scarsetee and chyncherie, in the same wise is he to blame that spendeth overlargely. And therfore seith Caton. Use, he seith, thy richesces that thou

hast geten in swich a manere, that men have no matiere ne cause to calle thee neither wrecche ne chynche; for it is a greet shame to a man to have a povere herte and a riche purs. He seith also: The goodes that thou hast ygeten, use hem by mesure, that is to seyn, spende hem mesurably; for they that folily wasten & despenden the goodes that they han, whan they han namoore propre of hir owene, they shapen hem to take the goodes of another man.

SEVE thanne, that ye shul flee avarice; usynge youre richesces in swich manere, that men seye nat that youre richesces been yburyed, but that ye have hem in youre myght & in youre weeldyngge. For awys man reproveth the avaricious man, and seith thus, in two vers. Wherto and why burieth a man his goodes by his grete avarice, and knoweth wel that nedes moste he dye; for deeth is the ende of every man, as in this present lyf. And for what cause or enchesoun joyneth he hym, or knytteth he hym, so faste unto his goodes, that alle his wittes mowen nat disseveren hym or departen hym from his goodes; & knoweth wel, or oghte knowe, that whan he is deed he shal nothyng bere with hym out of this world. And therfore seith Seint Augustyn: that The avaricious man is likened unto helle; that the moore it swelweth, the moore desir it hath to swelwe and devoure. And as wel as ye wolde eschewe to be called an avaricious man or chynche, as wel sholde ye kepe yow and governe yow in swich a wise that men calle yow nat foollarge. Therfore seith Tullius. The goodes, he seith, of thyn hous ne sholde nat been hyd, ne kept so cloos but that they myght been opened by pitee & debonairetee; that is to seyn, to yeven part to hem that han greet nede; Ne thy goodes shullen nat been so opene, to been every mannes goodes.

AFTERWARD, in getyngge of youre richesces & in usynge hem, ye shul alwey have thre thynges in youre herte; that is to seyn, oure Lord God, conscience, and good name. First, ye shul have God in youre herte; and for no richesce ye shullen do nothyng, which may in any manere displese God, that is youre creatour and makere; for after the word of Salomon. It is bettre to have a litel good with the love of God, than to have muchel good & tresour, and lese the love of his Lord God. And the prophete seith: that Bettre it is to been a good man and have litel good and tresour, than to been holden a shrewe, & have grete richesces. And yet seye I ferthermore, that ye sholde alwey doon youre bisynesse to gete yow richesces, so that ye gete hem with good conscience. And thapostle seith: